

# Speaking to the soul



## Joy

**Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.  
Philippians 3:1–2**

There is something incredibly impressive about people who are joyful when everything is going wrong. Paul's list of

problems was a long one. He had the indignity and discomfort of being in prison, not knowing whether he would ever be let out. Many of his fellow workers had let him down and he was continually up against fierce opposition. The sharpness of the conflict is very clear in these words as he describes his opponents as dogs. Their insistence that male converts to Christianity should be circumcised was, for Paul, a denial of the message that he was proclaiming. He was convinced that salvation comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that circumcision was definitely

Paul's joyfulness was so irrepressible that he was keen to encourage everyone else to be joyful as well! In the next chapter he commands: "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Paul clearly wasn't saying that everything is always going to go well. Indeed, Jesus frequently pointed out how tough it would be for those who decided to follow him (see, for example, John 16:33). But, through it all, it is miraculously possible to be joyful because the joy comes from our relationship with the Lord and not from our circumstances which, if they were the focus, would often and rightly make us downright miserable. Joy is one of the elements of the fruit of the Spirit, which develops in us gradually and unself-consciously as we get closer to God.

## **QUESTION**

What would it look like if you were always joyful?

## **PRAYER**

Loving God, thank you for the gift of joy, which you put in the hearts of everyone who loves you. Amen